

Epiphany Celebration

John Volkening - 6 January 2007

***INTROIT "O Child of God, Christ Jesus Come"**

O child of God, Christ Jesus come, and fill this world with hope for everyone.
May sorrow, war and injustice cease. Help us to partner in creating peace,
And live Your love, Your wondrous light to birth, O child of God, Christ Jesus , come.

***CALL TO WORSHIP from Isaiah 60 1:6 (responsively)**

One: Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of God has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but God will arise upon you, and God's glory will appear over you.

All: Nations shall come to your light, and their leaders to the brightness of your dawn.

One: Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons and daughters shall come from far away.

All: Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

One: A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come.

All: They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

***SONG FOR OUR JOURNEY**

Give light and people will find the way, (3 times)
People will find the way I do believe.

Teach peace and people will find the way, (3 times)
People will find the way I do believe.

Live love and people will find the way, (3 times)
People will find the way I do believe.

Have hope that people will find the way, (3 times)
People will find the way I do believe. People will find the way I do believe.

GOSPEL READING from Matthew 2:1-12

***SONG OF THE MAGI**

We Magi of Orient are, bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.
O star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

Glorious now behold the Christ Child, Son of God and Sacrifice;
Alleluia, alleluia! Sounds through the earth and skies.
O star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

COLLECTIVE PRAYER

Creator God, we thank you for revealing yourself to us in Jesus the Christ, we who once were not your people but whom you chose to adopt as your people. As ancient Israel confessed long ago, we realize that it was not because of our own righteousness, or our own superior wisdom, or strength, or power, or numbers. It was simply because you loved us, and chose to show us that love in Jesus.

As you have accepted us when we did not deserve your love, help us to accept those whom we find it hard to love. Forgive us God, for any attitude that we harbor in which we see ourselves as better or more worthy than others. Help us to remove the barriers of prejudice and to tear down all walls of bigotry. Loving God, help us realize that those walls that we erect for others only form our own prisons!

Fill us so full of your love that there is no more room for intolerance, and as you have forgiven us much, enable us with your strength to forgive others even more.

May we, through your guidance and our faithful obedience, find new avenues, in ways that we have not imagined, of holding the Light of your love so that it may be a Light of revelation for all people.

We thank you for your love, praise you for your Gift, ask for your continued Presence with us in the name of your Son, who has truly revealed your heart. Amen

BLESSING OF THE CHURCH

One: Christ Jesus is with you;

All: And also with you.

One: Peace be to this church,

All: And to all who gather, worship, work, and visit here.

One: The three wise ones came to Bethlehem in search of the Lord Jesus. They brought him precious gifts: gold to honor the newborn king, incense to the true God in human form, and myrrh to anoint his body, which one day would die like our own. Let us pray. O God, you once used a star to show to all the world that Jesus is your Son. May the light of that star that once guided wise ones to honor his birth, now guide us to recognize him also, to know you by faith, and to see you in the epiphanies of the daily experiences of our lives.

All: Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord - Jesus born of Mary - shall be revealed.

One: And all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

All: As the Magi once sought your brilliant light, O Lord, so may we seek to live and work in your splendor.

One: O God of Light, bless this our church and this our community of faith. May this be a place of peace and health. May each member of this community cultivate the gifts and graces you have bestowed, dedicating our talents and works for the good of all.

All: Make this church a shelter in the storm and a haven of rest for all in need of your warmth and care. And when we go out from this place, may we never lose sight of that Epiphany star.

Children: As we go about our work, our study, our play, keep us in its light and in your love.

(Blessing of the Chalk for Marking the Door)

One: Lord Jesus, through your Incarnation and birth in true human form, you have made all the earth holy. We now ask your blessing upon this simple gift of your creation - chalk. We use it as a tool to teach our children, and they use it as a tool in their play and games. Now, with your blessing, may it become a tool for us to mark the door of this church with the symbols of your wise servants who, so long ago, came to worship and adore you in your first home.

(The doorway is marked with the following of the symbol: **20 C M B 07**)

One: May we, in this church, and all who come to worship, to visit, to work, to learn, to meet, and to play, remember these things throughout the coming year. May all who come and go find peace, comfort, joy, hope, love, and transformation, for Christ dwells in this house of worship and in all of these hearts.

All: May we be Christ's light in the world. Amen and amen.

SENDING FORTH

Matthew 2:1-15

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise ones from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.'

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel." "

Then Herod secretly called for the wise ones and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.'

Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by God through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'